Dear Js,

7/31/72

No false pretense, what follows is bragging, a challenge, too - did you do this when you were young?

Just before dark, a neighbor having asked if he could catch several of the channel catfish that remain of the seven given me without asking me, I got Lil to go down to the pond with me to see if the golden trout were any tamer. Got some stale bread- five Parkey House, and with the too-long grass wet from a light rain, we did. As soon as we started talking, the large-mouth bass appeared, as they have become conditioned to. They swam just under the surface, close to the shore as the water permitted, and stopped and the place they have come to know means food. Meanwhile, a few of the golden trout did surface. And one of the real goldfish, fantails, about 3 lbs.

The bass are so tame it is hard to believe when you see it. They are like Poland Chinas, not bass. The trout were quite excited, swimming with great rapidity. So, without consultation, Lil and I intermixed bits of roll to in front of the trout. The hoggish bass dashed in and snatched it away. The trout swam faster and more erratically. Finally, one of them made a pass and took it. That did it! Except that for a reason of which I can't be sure they remain exceedingly nervous, the started, carefully to be sure, competing with the bass. Soon every visible fish, and they were nemerous, wer competing for the bread.

This made us fee good, but then the unexpected happened. The cats, for the first time ever, got into it. They then swam along the surface like marine haybalers scooping it all up in those enormous mouths. We've got 'em hooked. I've never tamed channel cats before! And just when we have hoped of getting rid of them. They muddy the pond too much. We lose some of the fun in the obliterating mud.

And I'll brag again, about midday. During the real hot weather, I walked in the a.m., dipped in the pool, infrequently mowed a bit, and just stayed in the cool of the house. So, the birds are a bit out of the habit of coming for the bread. I remembered it when I saw a couple of jays in the carport, on which my window gives (beginning not more than 18" from the floor). So, I went out and fed in the carport, couple of rolls. Didn't take time to make small pieces, and soon there were about 8 pieces a bit too large for birds except for carrying away. A flash of brown cuahgt my left eye, but I ignored it, for the rabbits tolerate us that much. Then it dawned on me that this had to be a baby from the sies and was the wrong shade. So, the next motion I looked at. Baby red squirrel. He took a quick estimate, snaffled the largest of the remaining pieces, and was off with it. I called Lil. Two of this year's young are establishing the own winter stores. Each went each time to the same places to turn off the lane, and each returned. The fascinating thing is how they each time got the largest remaining piece. So, I decided to try them out on more and took two whole rolls out-flatter and larger ones. I missed the first, but Lil got a kick. It was rather much. On a later one I counted and after at most seven steps he had to stop for a rest. But the first had it hanging from his mouth, his mouth as high as he could get it, and as he ran the bottom of the roll hit a stone and they all rolled over together. So, a couple more rolls and then the real intelligence. One of them figure, with it so good here, why haul it off, all the work that is. And he started casing the storage part of the carport for a new nest! I hope he gets discouraged. He had made a tentative reservation on a 2x4 from which shovels, rakes and the like hang. I like squirrels to look at, but I know only too well what they can do in a house-and that they so n learn about chimneys.

Anyway, country folk, was it that was down on the farm? I tell you, those cats could have swalled regulation baseballs, they and their mouths are that big. Bet 10 lbs, anyway.

Trouble with taming the squirrels is as with the rabbits, they get to trust man, and that is fatal. It is, generally, ith the quail. We always have at least one tame flock, and as soon as hu ting season starts they are lost. A few survive, they start all over again, and so do I. They usually come to all sides of the house and up to it during the winter. I mean right up against the walls and look at us as they eat-as long as we don't move fast.

Gonna read until bedtime, but I couldn't resist the temptation to boast a bit and perhaps carry you back many, many years. Never have made it with the pheasants, though. Mallards, hup, easy. They eat fro the kitchen step. But the pheasants never come closer than 20 feet ot the house. We are isolated enough for this. Sign of paranoid, I guess! H